



# Bereavement

Support for Schools/Settings and Parents/Carers

Caerphilly Educational Psychology Service

This document was adapted with the kind permission of Bracknell Forest Council and Innovate Services



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## 1. Rationale/Introduction

This document aims to offer support to schools or settings and to parents or carers on how best to support children and young people who have experienced loss. The document outlines some key practical advice as well as signposting to further organisations/resources that may be helpful.

### Grieving and isolation

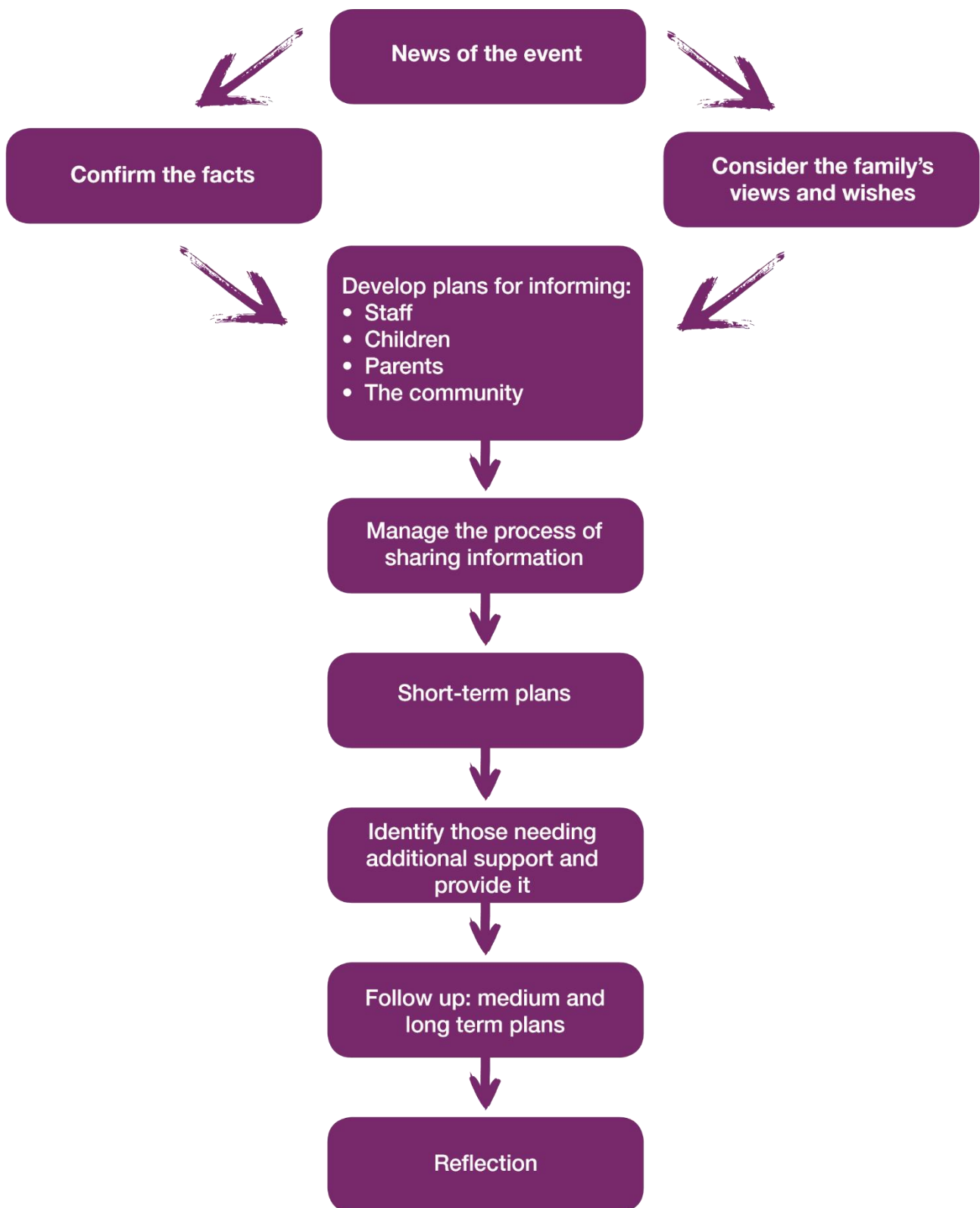
Being bereaved can be an extremely lonely time and talking with those we rely on and trust is one of the most helpful ways to cope. The impact of dealing with a bereavement, compounded with feelings of worry about external situations, can mean that feelings of grief aren't fully expressed. They could be worrying about the situation as a whole or worrying about themselves or others. This document aims to highlight some of the ways we can support those who are bereaved.

## 2. Information for Schools/Settings

### A sequence of responses

The following flowchart provides a possible sequence of events following the death of a child, adult or member of the school community. When such events occur, there is an immediate impact on the school community. When we personally feel a loss, our thinking can be impacted. This document may prompt you, guide your thinking and actions and help you to identify where you can find further support.

**Fig 1.1. Bereavement and Sad Events: A sequence of response for schools / settings**



Appendix 1.2 (pages 14-19) provides schools / settings with information relating to each stage of the sequence of events included in fig 1.1. We have attempted to make this information concise and practical so as not to overwhelm the reader. Please refer to appendix 1.2 for detailed information regarding each step.



### 3. Supporting Children and Young People affected by death

#### How children and young people react to death

Many children and young people can show outward distress when reacting to a death, whilst some will hardly react at all. There may be cases where they do not know how to react, as they do not fully understand what has happened.

The way in which children and young people respond to a death is related to their age and developmental stage. For children with special educational needs, it will be their functional level of understanding rather than their chronological age which will be most helpful in thinking about how they may understand the death and how to support them.

The response will also be affected by the nature and emotional quality of the relationship that they had with the individual who has died and the particular circumstances of the loss. It is also influenced by the behaviour and attitude of those around them when dealing with the death.

Below are some broad guidelines and generalisations about how children may respond to death at different ages and stages. However, it is important to remember that all children will develop at their own pace and in different ways.

#### Typical Grief Reactions by Age:

##### 0-1 year:

- They have no ability to conceptualise death.
- Their memory capacity for specific relationships is undeveloped. Unless the person who died was a close caregiver, they may have very little response.

- They may be aware that something is different or missing.

##### 1-2 years:

- Children younger than 2 years old do not understand the concept of death.
- They are concrete thinkers. It may feel callous to explain death in a straightforward way, but metaphors and euphemisms will be confusing. Provide simple and clear explanations.
- When someone dies, they are likely to show behaviours associated with separation anxiety, e.g. looking for the person and crying. If they are old enough to ask, they may enquire where the person is or when they will be back.
- They probably won't understand that there are factors beyond our control and won't understand why the person chose to leave, particularly if the person who died was an adult. Make sure to explain that death and leaving were not things their loved one chose.
- They are not too young to sense the stress and emotion felt by grownups in their lives.
- Sticking to their normal routine may provide a sense of security, normalcy, and comfort.
- Give them attention and provide them with reassurance.

Signs of distress may include increased irritability and crying, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, and/or withdrawing. If these or any other behaviours concern you, you may want to discuss them with their GP or seek outside counselling.

##### 2-4 years:

- They still don't understand the finality of death and still might see it as abandonment.

- They see death as reversible or not permanent. Dead people are simply sick or asleep and can get better or wake up.
- They may ask the same questions over and over; be patient and stick with the same straightforward explanation.
- They may not have the words to explain how they are feeling. You are likely to see expressions of grief through behaviour and through play with toys and/or drawing.
- They may experience separation anxiety. When you must leave the child, it might be helpful to prepare them in advance that you will be leaving and provide them with reassurance about when you will return.
- They may feel the person's absence in an intense way one moment and be back to happily playing the next.
- They will be aware of changes in patterns and routine. Provide them with a lot of reassurance, nurturing, and consistency.

Signs of distress may include regressive behaviours in the areas of sleep, potty training, and/or eating. They may become clingy. They may appear irritable, confused or suffer from nightmares. If these or any other behaviours concern you, you may want to discuss them with their GP or seek outside counselling.

#### **4-9 years:**

- They are starting to develop the ability to feel guilt. Guilt can be confusing for them and they may feel guilty for odd things.
- "Magical Thinking" is seen around 4 years old. This is when children believe their thoughts and wishes can cause things to happen. For this reason children may irrationally feel responsible for the death because of thoughts or wishes they had prior to the death. (Example: I'm responsible for the death because I told my mum I hated her and wished she would go away).
- They may be interested in the process of dying and ask 'how' or 'why' things have

happened. Their questioning may be repetitive.

- They have begun to understand that death is not reversible or temporary, but still may believe that death only happens to some people and will not happen to them.
- Death is often personified as things like ghosts and monsters.
- They lack the words to express their emotions. They may have strong feelings of grief and loss but can't express this in appropriate ways. They may express feelings through anger and frustration.
- Symbolic play using drawings and stories can be helpful.
- They may need permission and encouragement to grieve. Encourage expression of feelings through talk, play, or physical outlets.

Signs of significant distress may include regression, nightmares, sleep disturbances, and/or changes in eating. They may engage in violent play. If these or any other behaviours concern you, you may want to discuss them with their GP or seek outside counselling.

#### **9-12 years:**

- They understand the finality of death and that everyone eventually dies, however they still may engage in denial that it will happen to them (don't we all?)
- They are curious about the physical aspects of death – what does the body look like? What does it feel like? etc. Provide straightforward explanations.
- They know how to express their feelings and emotions, but they may choose not to. Encourage them to express the range of feelings they are having.
- They may be concerned with how others are reacting to the death. What is the right way to react? How should they react?
- Involve them. Allow them to give input and make choices regarding funerals, memorials, belongings, etc.

Signs of distress may include having problems at school, withdrawing from friends, acting out, disturbances in sleeping and eating, an overwhelming concern with the body, and/or role confusion. If these or any other behaviours concern you, you may want to discuss them with their GP or seek outside counselling.

### 12-18 years:

- They are capable of having a more adult perspective of death.
- Involve them. Allow them to give input and make choices regarding funerals, memorials, belongings, etc.
- They are able to think abstractly about death and related concepts.
- They may try to make sense of things, philosophise, and/or search for meaning.
- Their mourning may be more traditional – extreme sadness, anger, denial. Even though they are capable of expressing grief they may choose not to.
- They may try to give the appearance that they are coping well when they are not.
- They may feel forced to act as a consoler and comforter for younger children or adults.
- Be available, listen, and encourage them to talk about it. Do not attempt to minimise what they are feeling.
- Set a good example by speaking about your own feelings surrounding the death (without putting them in the role of the comforter).
- They may be more willing to talk about grief with people outside of the family. Grief support groups may be helpful.
- They may act out or engage in dangerous behaviour such as risk taking, drugs, alcohol, etc.

Signs of significant distress may include depression, anger, suicidal thoughts, rule breaking, role confusion, and/or acting out. If these or any other behaviours concern you, you may want to discuss them with the school counsellor or GP or seek outside counselling.

## What can help?

While every child and young person will respond slightly differently, there are things which you can do to help them to understand what has happened, process their own feelings and emotions and, in time, move through the grieving process.

- Be honest and open; explain why the person died at an age-appropriate level. Answer questions as truthfully as you can in a way the child can understand. It's okay not to have all the answers and to say that you don't know.
- Use clear language such as "dead" and "death" rather than what we may perceive as more comforting language such as "gone to sleep" or "loss". These phrases can be confusing for children and may cause them to believe that if someone is lost then they can be found, for example.
- Don't force your child to talk about what has happened but create an atmosphere where they know they can talk about their experience of the death and that you will listen to what they have to say. It might be helpful to create opportunities where there is time and space to talk such as doing a quiet activity together such as going for a walk, but do not force them to speak. Reassure them if they blame themselves in any way, which can be common.
- Talk about the person who has died and share happy memories of them.
- Don't be afraid to express your own emotions and explain to your child that this is a normal part of the process when someone dies. However, remember that they are still developing the ability to understand their grief and to support others, so may not be able to support an adult in the same way.
- Reassure your child that it is okay for them to be upset too and help them to find ways of expressing difficult feelings which are not disruptive or destructive. Try to stay calm and avoid confrontation. They need to work through their emotions, so help them to express and cope with their feelings by being patient. If they get angry with you and cry, although difficult, try to see this as them

sharing their feelings and emotions with you. This is part of the grieving process. Help them to understand that their behaviours may be as a result of feeling angry because they miss the person who has died and don't understand why it happened. Talking this through will help them to better understand their own emotions.

- Continue with established routines as much as possible, encouraging children to engage with their usual activities and interests so that there is a sense of familiarity. In some situations, it may be more difficult for your child to have a physical or mental break from the loss or trauma they have experienced so it is important to try to provide opportunities which allow for this. Watch a film together, encourage them to do things they enjoy such as going for a bike ride, walking the dog, playing a game etc.
- Try to encourage a 'no pressure' outline of the day, which involves getting up in the morning, eating and drinking regularly and going to bed before midnight. It is recognised that sleep may initially be a particular issue for young people who have experienced trauma. They should not worry about this, unless it continues for more than two weeks, in which case, you may wish to contact your GP for advice.
- Try to plan virtual get togethers or opportunities to speak to friends.
- Make sure they realise that it is ok to be angry, shout, cry, and to question but also to smile, laugh and engage in activities that make them happy. It is important to do things that make us smile when we are sad, this is how we look after ourselves and we should not feel guilty or bad for doing this.
- Don't expect your child to grieve in exactly the same way that you do or that a sibling does.
- As the death of a loved one can hugely impact a family routine and structure, you should prepare your child in advance for changes they may face.
- Help your child to say goodbye; include them in discussions about the funeral and allow them to make some choices in how they would like to take part. If planning for or attending the funeral isn't an option, find alternative or

additional ways to help them say goodbye such as gathering photos, making a memory box, or planting some seeds.

- Allow yourself time to grieve so that you are best able to support your child.
- On the child's return to school, share information with their teacher so that they are aware of what they have experienced and how they have dealt with it. Returning to a different situation may trigger some feelings and emotions which you thought they had dealt with.



## 4. Sources of Support

Whilst every effort has been made to ensure accuracy at the time of the creation of this document (16th April 2020), changes may be made by the individual organisations in the future.

There is a wealth of resources and expertise that can be accessed by schools or settings and parents or carers. Some examples are listed here:

- **Bereavement: Advice and information for parents (Young Minds)**
- **Resources for children and young people (Child Bereavement UK)**

Below are the details of a variety of organisations that provide support and resources:

### National Support

#### Childline:

**Telephone: 0800 1111**

**Website: [childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk)**

A free and confidential, 24-hour helpline for children and young people in distress or danger. Trained volunteer counsellors comfort, advise and protect children and young people who may feel they have nowhere else to turn.

#### Cruse Bereavement Care:

**Telephone: 0808 808 1677** (Mon to Friday 9.30am - 5pm and 8pm on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday)

**Website: [cruse.org.uk](http://cruse.org.uk)**

A charity supporting bereaved people of all ages. The free phone helpline is available to support anyone who has been bereaved and wants to speak with someone directly. Their website provides information specific to supporting young people with bereavement. They provide a wealth of resources regarding how adults can support young people through bereavement generally.

#### Hope Again:

**Telephone: 0808 808 1677** (Mon to Friday 9.30am – 5pm)

**Website: [hopeagain.org.uk](http://hopeagain.org.uk)**

This youth bereavement service, run by Cruse, is free and confidential. The helpline is available specifically for children and young people who have been affected by death. The website provides online information for young people through advice and sharing of personal and family stories from others who have experienced bereavement.

#### Winston's Wish:

**Telephone: 08088 020 02** (Mon to Friday 9am – 5pm)

**Website: [winstonswish.org](http://winstonswish.org)**

They are a leading childhood bereavement charity and the largest provider of services to bereaved children, young people and their families in the UK. The helpline offers therapeutic advice for parents, carers and professionals regarding supporting a grieving child or young person.

For young people themselves they offer an email service, called 'ASK', for advice and support following a bereavement. They also offer an online chat (currently available Wednesday and Friday 12 – 4pm) for young people and a 'Crisis Messenger' service accessed by texting 'WW' to 85258,

#### Kooth:

**Website: [kooth.com](http://kooth.com)**

Free and anonymous online counselling support for young people aged between 10 and 25. Available Monday to Friday 9am - 10pm and Saturday to Sunday 6pm-10pm.

#### Grief Encounter:

**Telephone: 0808 802 0111** (Mon to Friday 9am - 9pm)

**Website: [griefencounter.org.uk](http://griefencounter.org.uk)**

Support for children and families who have been bereaved, available via phone, online chat and email. This is particularly accessible for older children and offers interviews with young people who have experienced bereavement and provides a 'Bereavement Support Teen Guide'. They offer a helpline, live webchat and email service which can be directly accessed by young people.

**BBC Bitesize:****Website: [bbc.co.uk/bitesize](http://bbc.co.uk/bitesize)**

In liaison with Child Bereavement UK they offer a range of questions and answers and short videos regarding bereavement, illness and loss.

**Child Bereavement UK:****Telephone: 0800 02 88840****Website: [childbereavementuk.org](http://childbereavementuk.org)**

An organisation that helps children and young people (up to age 25), parents, and families, to rebuild their lives when a child grieves or when a child dies. The website provides information and resources outlining how to support children and young people in talking about bereavement. They also provide a Live Chat and email service.

There is a 'Child Bereavement UK' app designed for 11-25 year olds who have experienced bereavement. There is also an online game 'Apart of Me' for ages 12+ which is designed to help individuals cope with the death of a loved one - available on the App store and Google Play. The website also offers a Live Chat and email service

**Young Minds:****Website: [youngminds.org.uk](http://youngminds.org.uk)**

A charity supporting children and young people's mental health, they also offer advice and information for parents regarding bereavement and on talking to young people about death.

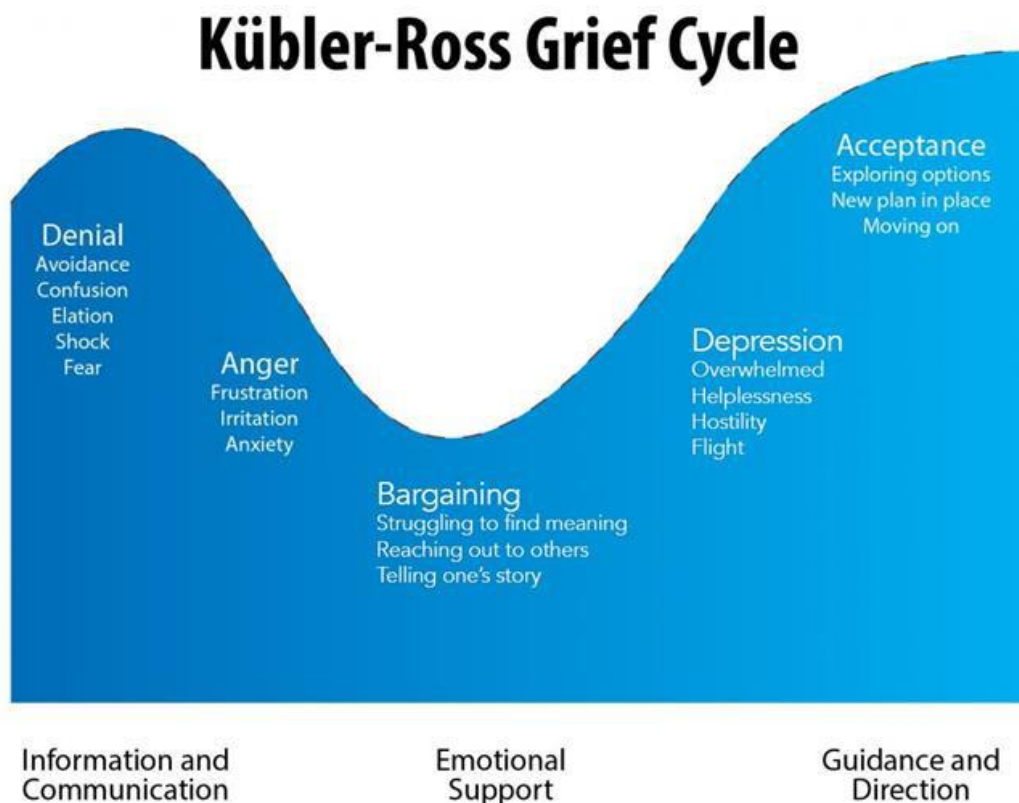
# GRIEF

## 5. Appendices

### Appendix 1.1 Psychological Models - Understanding Grief The process of grief

There is no set pattern or time limit to the complex emotions and processes of grief. It is something which everyone will experience in slightly different ways. However, understanding some of the suggested processes can be helpful in understanding your own grief and, in turn, that of your child. While there have been suggestions of linear models, most try to depict the complexity of the process.

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross (1969) developed the **Grief Cycle model**. This model explored five stages of grief; denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. These are part of a framework that makes up our learning to live with the ones we have lost, helping us to frame and identify what we may be feeling. Not everyone goes through all these stages or visits each stage in a linear order. Some people in grief also report more stages. The hope is that knowledge of each potential stage makes an individual better equipped to cope with life and loss.

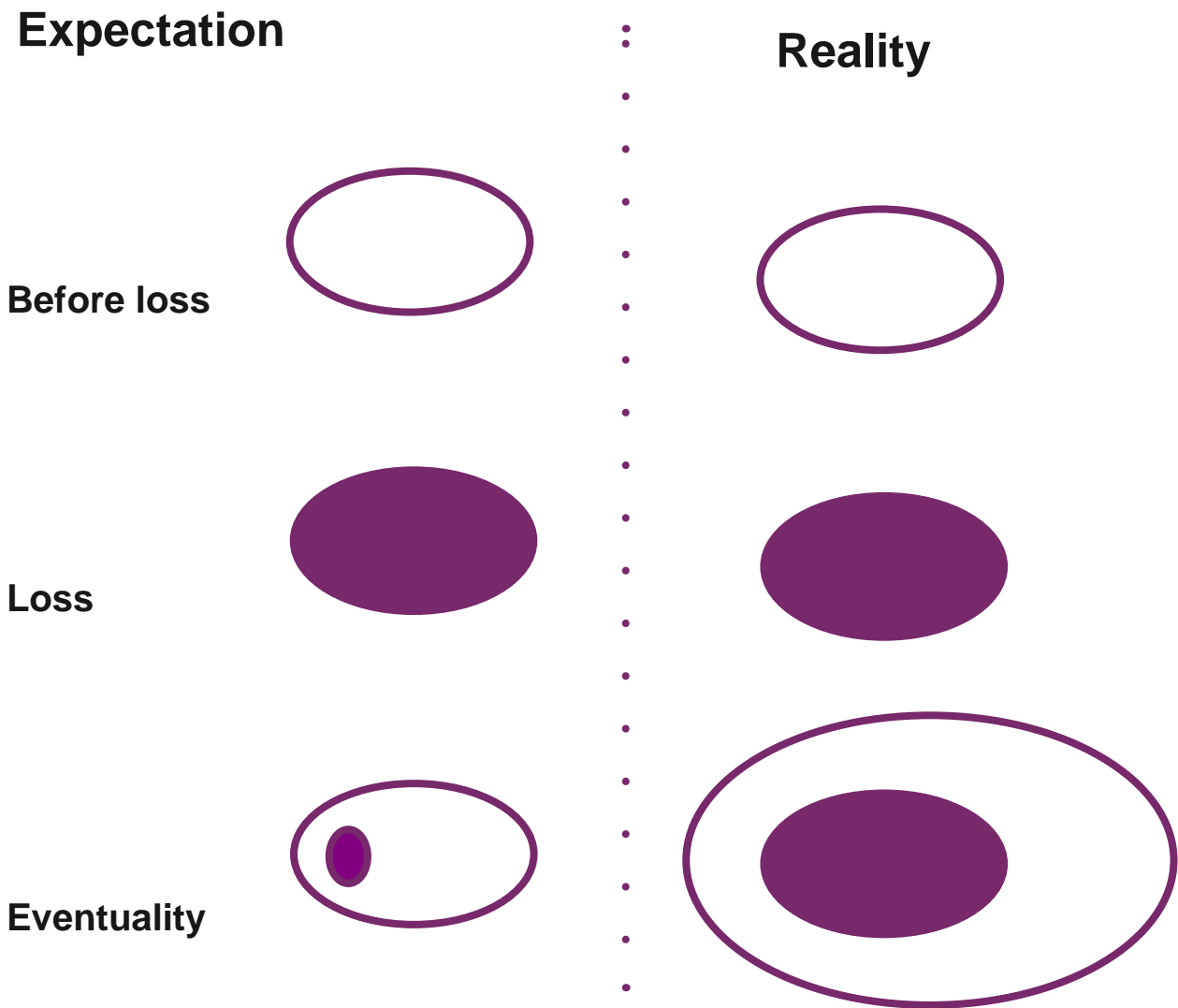


Strobe and Schut's (1995) **Dual Process Model** is dynamic and shows the bereaved person alternating between "loss-orientation", which focuses on the loss of the person who has died, and "restoration-orientation", which avoids focusing on the loss. Both of these are needed for future adjustment and it is normal to move between the two modes.

This is represented visually below:



Tonkin's (1996) model of **Growing Around Grief** suggests that grief does not lessen over time or become smaller. Instead the person adjusts their lives to accommodate the pain. This in turn leads to the grief being less dominant and all-encompassing in their lives; other people and new experiences help the person to live with the grief, although it is not forgotten. Making new friends, having new experiences are all examples of "growing around grief".



None of these models fully explain the process of grief, but they may be helpful in recognising there may be multiple times when children experience the recurrence of feelings of loss. Moving between grief and getting on with life is normal and daily ups and downs, for a period of weeks or months after a significant loss, can be expected.



## Appendix 1.2 Bereavement and Sad Events: A sequence of response for schools / settings

Appendix 1.2. provides schools or settings with information relating to each stage of the sequence of events included in fig 1.1. (page 4 of this document). We have attempted to make this information concise and practical.

### Confirm the facts

- It is important to establish the cause of death. Rumour and speculation can be created when there is a lack of hard evidence. Since the advent of social media and mobile phones, misinformation can spread quickly and add unnecessary distress to family members affected. Accurate information, shared appropriately, may help to counteract such rumour.
- To ascertain accurate information, direct contact with the family is essential. In some circumstances clarification may need to be sought from other sources, such as the police.
- Being able to answer the following questions is likely to provide you with enough information to pass on to the school community:
  - What has happened?
  - Was this expected or unexpected?
  - When did it happen?
  - Who was involved?
  - Are there additional fatalities, casualties or injuries?
  - Are there implications of this death for other members of the local community (e.g.

someone may have contributed to the death in some way)?

- Siblings may be affected, implicated or assumed to have some connection.
- Have all the family/families been notified?

### Consider the families views and wishes

Direct contact with the family will be a difficult but essential early action in establishing what has taken place, allowing you to accurately communicate with the school community. This requires great sensitivity and can include further complications (for example, contacting a staff member's wider family who have not previously been contacted by the school).

At such a distressing time, it is important to identify how much information the family wish to become widely known; this enables you to respect their wishes when addressing the child's questions. The family may need time to consider the various options, particularly as they may be distraught, in shock, numb or even in denial.

If you are considering any memorial or celebration to channel positivity or provide staff and students with the opportunity to share their grief, this will need to be discussed with the family first. The cultural heritage of the family, traditions and adherence to faith may influence how they would like things to be handled. School staff will need to be particularly sensitive to these matters.

Further information on funerals, memorials and remembrance can be found under the 'short term plans' section.

## Develop plans for informing staff, children, parents, the community

### Initial response

Before it becomes necessary to issue a bulletin, you may have been able to confidentially establish detailed facts about the circumstances. Your ability to confidentially establish facts will be dependant on the timing of news becoming available to all parties, although would be helpful to minimise inaccurate information or rumours.

### Informing staff

Ideally staff members should be informed directly (e.g. by telephone, or word-of-mouth to those on-site if the school is open). A meeting or conference call should be arranged to outline plans for informing children and determine strategies for managing their reactions.

Extra consideration should be given when making parents aware of the reactions that children may display and strategies for support. Support from the educational psychology service, school based counselling team and other professionals may be useful at this point and can be available on request. Local support groups outside of the local authority, such as bereavement charities, may also be contacted for support. Please see pages 9-10 of this document for contact details.

Unexpected news of a death can trigger recollections and experiences of personal loss and bereavement amongst staff. For professional staff members, this may interfere with their accustomed day-to-day confidence in handling exchanges with children and parents, even where a well-established relationship exists. Staff are all individuals with their own history and experiences and senior staff need to be aware that responses will vary; sensitivity and support will be necessary for colleagues, as well as pupils and parents/ carers.

### Informing children

Children and young people's awareness and understanding of the issues around death need to be taken into account when information is relayed to them. Information about common levels of understanding relating to a child's age/developmental stage can be found on page 5 of this document.

You need to be aware of the staff's own feelings of competence regarding discussing the issues with children.

### Informing parents

When an agreed message or script has been chosen for communicating the information, it is important that this information is made available to parents (Example scripts are available from the EPS upon request). Parents whose children are in attendance at the school will need to know exactly what their children have been told.

In some circumstances, parents may be the first people to explore the bereavement with their child(ren). They will need assistance on how to explain death and how to support the reactions and behaviours that may result. They will need information on professionals, charities and other support structures to access, considering the individual family's needs where necessary (e.g. EAL).

## **Managing the process of sharing information**

### **For those children who are attending school.**

It would be beneficial for children to be told in small groups, preferably alongside other children that they know or have a connection with, and by adults that they feel safe with.

Large gatherings as a means of explaining the news is generally discouraged. In some situations, children who are unsure how to feel once given the news may take their lead from those that are visibly and audibly expressing their feelings and distress; this can lead to difficult escalations.

In smaller settings, children may be encouraged to adapt their expected routine according to the closeness of their relationships with the child/young person, or adult who has died. Being alongside them in their shock and distress, validating their feelings, listening and supporting is vitally important.

Time may be needed to accommodate these feelings depending on the severity of the loss and age of the students. The monitoring of a flexible departure from normal routine can incorporate opportunities for staff and students to identify issues, or request the chance to talk to someone individually/in small groups, about the issues which have arisen or been stimulated. The school should be aware of differing belief systems and practices adopted by different cultures and religions with regard to death.

### **For those children who are not currently attending school.**

It is essential that the bulletin or information sent out by the school surrounding the circumstances of death, family expectations and/or future memorials is clear, concise and without ambiguity.

Where information is shared within school settings, there are additional opportunities to

clarify messages that appear less clear to students or parents.



## Short-term plans

### In relation to school-work

Staff and parents need to be aware that it will take time to return to any sense of normality. Normal work may need to be put on the backburner. Students will experience periods where they cannot focus and their memory or retention is poor. Some students may feel grief for a considerable time, especially if they are vulnerable in some way. Parents will need to know this at a time that they are expected to home-school/take the lead on supporting their child's learning. Students should be reassured that their feelings and behaviours are normal; being upset is a healthy reaction.

### Funerals

After sharing the news of the death, focus often centres around the anticipated funeral arrangements. Family's wishes are of significant importance and the need for the school's participation will often fall to the Headteacher.

### Remembrance and memorials

Ceremonies may be held at school, such as memorials led by a religious leader affiliated by the school. Positive actions of remembrance are recognised as a possible healing activity, such as special places or a place to share photographs, thoughts, and feelings in a remembrance book.

Community members may start leaving flowers at the school gate, for example, which has caused further challenges like knowing when it is appropriate to move/remove these items. The visual analogy of the flowers dying themselves can also be distressing for some if left there for significant periods.

Some schools, authorities and workplaces respond to a need to remember by providing an online space for positive comments and messages of goodwill. This may provide an opportunity to bring the community together.

This does, however, need careful planning and thought including:

- How long will access to this site/virtual space be offered?
- Who will have access and how can data be protected?
- Can individuals change/amend their comments?
- What happens to the information gathered when comments are closed (e.g. made into a remembrance book/passed onto the family)?
- Who will moderate comments sent to ensure that they are appropriate? Most importantly, any memorial or remembrance will need to be in accordance with the wishes of the family, and respectful of religious and cultural beliefs, and traditions of the family.

### Identify individuals requiring additional support and provide it

In the circumstances of a bereavement, all parties may need additional, specialised support, such as the children bereaved, those who have been bereaved previously or those for whom loss has been a significant part of their lives (but not necessarily identified).

Although school staff may not feel comfortable exploring ideas and feelings amongst pupils, they have an important role to play. A list of services, agencies and charities that may be able to support individuals or groups further can be found in the 'Sources of Support' section of this document.

We would recommend that the affected do not become isolated and maintain contact with a support network. Isolation could lead to an intensification of feelings of loneliness and grief and there could be family tensions that arise from increased time together.

#### **Cruse advise those bereaved to:**

- Keep in regular contact with friends by phone, text, email and video calls.
- Get fresh air or sunlight.
- Exercise or get out for a walk.
- Try to keep to a regular routine or schedule.
- Get as much sleep/rest as you can.
- Find jobs to do around the house at times when you have more energy.



- Don't feel guilty if you are struggling – reach out to others who might be finding it difficult too, and seek practical help from friends, family or neighbours.

#### **They advise others of ways to help:**

- Try and stay in contact with bereaved friends, even if you cannot visit.
- Find out if they can talk on the phone or over the internet.
- Let them talk about how they are feeling and the person who has died.
- If you know that someone is likely to struggle practically, you could drop off supplies and gifts to them.

#### **Follow up: develop medium and long term plans**

The shock to the individual in experiencing trauma may be physical, emotional and cognitive, immediate or delayed. A school system, rather like an individual, may “carry on as normal” in an effort to cope, but the effects may be experienced long afterwards.

Having made arrangements to manage the immediate aftermath and having identified children who may need additional support and commissioned this, the school staff (and particularly the Headteacher) may find that they have their own issues which require them to seek counselling or other support.

Monitoring the “emotional health” of the organisation, and affording space for individuals, or whole groups, to take restorative actions will be very important.

You may consider making permanent curricular changes to proactively address issues around death and loss for future cohorts of children, allowing the school to use its experience in its own development plan. Depending on the feeling within the school community and from the

family, it may be appropriate to consider establishing permanent memorials or physical tokens of celebration, marking anniversaries or dedicating particular events/occasions/creation to the memory of a loved one.

#### **Reflection**

Learning from an event can be a positive developmental process, and the collected thoughts and feelings of people who have shared a painful experience can be a very useful source of direction and reassurance to others who may tread that difficult path, or one close to it, in the future.

As an SLT or wider staff team, you may wish to ensure a period of reflection to learn from this experience.

## Checklists of information

The following questions and information may help you to plan actions when planning, disseminating information and supporting children and their families:

### When gathering information as an initial response, do you have clear information on:

- What has happened?
- Was this expected or unexpected?
- When did it happen?
- Who was involved?
- Are there additional fatalities, casualties or injuries?
- Are there implications of this death for other members of the local community (e.g. someone may have been involved in contributing to the death in some way)?
- Are there any siblings that may be affected, implicated or assumed to have some connection?
- Have all the family/families been notified?
- What are the family's wishes for sharing of information?

### When informing children:

#### Who's the best person to tell the child?

##### Is the adult:

- Known and trusted by the child?
- Someone who can maintain contact in the future?
- Someone who allows children to express their feelings?
- Someone who understands children's expressions of grief?

#### Where should a child be told?

- Is the place familiar to the child?
- Does the child feel safe there?
- Should the child be told individually?
- Should they be told in a small group with other children that they relate to?

#### When thinking about giving the news?

- What language is most easily understood by the child?
- Is the language used factual and consistent?
- Does the child have the opportunity to ask questions?
- Does the child have the opportunity to show an emotional response?
- How will you know if the child has understood the information?
- Are there cultural or religious factors to consider?

#### When sending out information (e.g. in a bulletin)

- Is the language clear, factual and unambiguous?
- Can any of the information be misinterpreted?
- Does this information take into consideration the views of the family?
- Does the bulletin explain where students/parents/others can go for additional support and arrangements that the school has made for coming to terms with this sort of experience?
- Have you removed all euphemisms? (use words like dead or died instead)
- Do you need to run any of the information by other professionals who support you, or the Communications Team?

**Some questions that may help you identify vulnerable individuals...**

- Were any individuals directly involved?
- Did anyone witness the event?
- Are there any siblings or members of the household?
- Which children were closest to the deceased?
- Which children are displaying emotional distress?
- Have any of the children experienced significant relational losses in the past or experienced trauma?
- Children with pre-existing mental health or SEMH needs?
- Children with learning difficulties?
- Children who are currently experiencing difficulties at home?
- Are any children being blamed?
- Any students who may be vulnerable due to culture or language issues?



# Bereavement

Support for Schools/ Settings and Parents/Carers